Volume III.
Number 15.

Week of
June 8, 1942

Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

1942

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†"By Jupiter" opened Wednesday, June 3rd, at the Shubert Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Critics' Theatre Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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Published by

CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, 235 East 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Yearly Subscription
$15.00

"By Jupiter"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
June 4, 1942

"By Jupiter" Starts Summer Season With a Lot of Laughs

"By Jupiter," musical comedy by Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers. Produced by Wiman and Rodgers, in association with Richard Kollmar, at the Shubert Theatre, New York, June 3, 1942.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

THERE is good cause for joy around the Shubert Theatre this morning. Last night's opening, which was that of "By Jupiter," has all the earmarks of a rousing Summer hit. Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers, the boys from Syracuse and points adjacent, wrote it from material suggested by Julian Thompson's "The Warrior's Husband."

That, as practically everybody will be remembering today, is the piece that sent Katharine Hepburn skyrocketing out to the Pacific Coast 11 years ago and kept her there until she was, in the movies, the toast of all 48 states.

Unless signs fail this musicalized version of "The Warrior's Husband" is the piece that will do something of a like service for a pretty little blonde lady named Constance Moore. Not send her to the movies, because she already has been there, but keep her around Broadway for a season or two while she is acquiring enough prestige to demand two or three times whatever her contract called for before.

Antiope's a Help

La Hepburn had, and Miss Moore has, the role of Antiope, who is a perfect setup for any personable young woman who can add charm to romance and assume a certain masculine boldness modestly and with taste. Miss Moore has the gift and a crooning voice to help.

Antiope is the sister of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. When Theseus and a band of Greeks invaded their island the ladies were ready to fight, but discovered that their kisses were more devastating than their spears and settled for half.

Mr. Hart, writing the lyrics and sharing the book with Mr. Rodgers, has dirtied up the suggestions a bit, as was inevitable, but not too boldly. Ray Bolger is the star of the proceedings, playing Sapiens, the somewhat sappy son of Pomposia, and Ray, thank goodness, can dish the dirt without smirking over it, he being a decent sort by instinct.

He is pretty constantly amusing through a series of frilly adventures a coarser comedian could easily make offensive. His dancing, of course, is his own and supremely skillful.

Incidentally, he has taught Bertha Belmore, playing Pomposia, a step or two and Bertha, after years of playing haughty dowagers and cockney maids, made the hit of her recent stage life last night dancing with her star.

Rodgers and Hart were right, I think, in deciding that "The Warrior's Husband" offers a perfect background for musical comedy. The Amazons are commanding in shapeliness and grace, the invading Greeks are stalwart and fascinating romantics, the inverted sex comedy, playing the men as sissies and the women as warriors, is as sure-fire on Broadway as any line librettists can toy with.

Scotching a Rumor

Incidentally, the reports that John O'Hara and Marc Connelly were called in to touch up the book is vigorously denied by Mr. Hart. Just one of those rumors spread by an authoritative enemy source, probably.

The support is superior, Benay Venuta outdoing Benay Venuta in songs and fitting a line of comedy that was always a little on the masculine side into the Amazon picture with perfect ease.

Ronald Graham is the handsome Theseus, and a help with the singing. The Hightower boys, Robert and Lewis, Flower Hujer and a couple of other dancers, Vera-Ellen one of them, I suspect, ably point up the ensembles.

The music is vigorous and soothing by turns, "Nobody's Heart Belongs to Me," "The Gateway of the Temple of Minerva," "Life With Father," "Jupiter Forbid" and "Here's a Hand" were popular numbers.

The attractive setting is the last one Jo Mielziner did before he went to war, and is a nice one to remember him by. The dances give Robert Alton a grand chance and Joshua Logan has done his usually competent job of staging.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
June 4, 1942

Amazon Love

By RICHARD WATTS *Jr.*

IT IS probable that this is the last of the lavish, resplendent musical shows that we will see for some time, perhaps for the duration. As such it is only fitting that it should be the work of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, who have long contributed so handsomely to a type of show in which the American theater has been particularly expert. It is appropriate, too, that this "By Jupiter" should possess a characteristically charming score, ingenious lyrics, beautiful settings and costumes, a first-rate comedian, brilliantly staged dances and a pleasant air of festivity. That its book, which is based on the play of some years ago called "The Warrior's Husband," hits too insistently on one joke, and that a dubious one, for its humor is on the debit side, but happily Ray Bolger is on hand to make the somewhat epicene comedy amusing rather than tasteless, and "By Jupiter" becomes an attractive entertainment.

• • •

The Messrs. Rodgers and Hart, it seems, have a taste for pseudo-classical backgrounds, and, as you will recall, if you happened to see Miss Katharine Hepburn darting about with grace and beauty as an Amazon warrior in the original play, "By Jupiter" deals in ribald fashion with the battle between Theseus and his Greeks and Queen Hippolyta and her lady warriors. What interests the authors particularly is the humor they find inherent in the reversed position of the sexes in the land of the Amazons, a humor which has a somewhat questionable way of concerning itself with the absence of virility, to put it mildly, among the men of Hippolyta's land. It isn't a very funny joke in the first place and it can grow terribly monotonous through constant repetition, but it happens that in addition to being a wonderful dancer, Mr. Bolger is a fine comic and he usually succeeds in making the proceedings hilarious.

• • •

Although Mr. Rodgers's score lack the enchanting brilliance of his music for "Pal Joey" and "The Boys From Syracuse," it is nonetheless gay and charming. At the moment it strikes me that the numbers I liked best were "Everything I Got," "Nobody Belongs to Me" and "Jupiter Forbid," but almost all of them proved brightly effective. Mr. Hart's lyrics lack the brilliance of which he is capable, but they are far superior to the run of musical show verses. Mr. Hart does like that one joke, though. Robert Alton, of course, is a master at staging exciting and original dances and for "By Jupiter" he has arranged a series of numbers that never fail to be lovely and sparkling. Then, too, Jo Mielziner knows how to set such a show with true imagination and Irene Sharaff has a talent for the right sort of costumes, so that the new production is always a thing of striking beauty.

• • •

As I seem to have suggested two or three times, Mr. Bolger is the life of the party, dancing with his customary skill, proving himself a remarkably adroit comic and achieving the feat of playing the difficult role of the Queen's ingenue husband not only without offensiveness but with a most engaging gift for sympathetic characterization. Miss Constance Moore, a recruit from the cinema, is an attractive and modest heroine, playing with pleasant freshness the girl warrior Miss Hepburn created in the non-musical version. Miss Benay Venuta is of assistance as the Queen of the Amazons and Ronald Graham is a satisfactory hero. There are some valuable contributions in the smaller parts, too. The veteran Miss Bertha Belmore stopped the show at one point with her surprising gift for modern dancing and, although the program does not make me certain on the point, I think the young blonde dancer who is of such dynamic and pictorial help is cryptically named Vera-Ellen. "By Jupiter" is entertaining.

NEW YORK SUN
June 4, 1942

'By Jupiter,' Rodgers and Hart Musical, Is Offered At the Shubert

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

IF WE want to be technical, a new theatrical season opened last night at the Shubert Theater with the arrival of "By Jupiter," a Rodgers and Hart contribution to the long summer evenings. And if we want to be hopeful, we can take "By Jupiter" as a harbinger and look forward to a season full of dazzle and care-free jokes and girls in pretty dresses and Ray Bolgers with magic feet. The prospect seems almost too good to be true, and probably is.

But "By Jupiter" is good enough for a start. It has the fine gloss of the American musical theater when expert and appreciative hands polish it. It moves with dash and that effortless enthusiasm which comes from the best kind of professionalism. It is handsome to look at, and funny enough and full of good tunes. Mr. Bolger dances his feet off and always recovers them in time for the next number. Benay Venuta and Constance Moore are lovely Amazons; the girls wear bright, brief tunics and pursue one another with spears. It is a longish show and seems all too short, and it is hard to give higher praise to a musical.

And, in addition, the plot is perfectly all right. Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers have borrowed it from "The Warrior's Husband," which Julian F. Thompson wrote and which was presented ten years ago with a long-legged, attractive young woman named Katharine Hepburn in the cast. Mr. Hart and Mr. Rodgers have borrowed the plot and decorated it somewhat and kept the topsy-turvy humor which grew naturally out of its picture of a lengendary life in which all the women were warriors and all the men quivering and protected. (In the present version, the women learn better, thanks chiefly to the romantic prowess of the Greek Theseus, who sweeps Antiope off her feet.)

Mr. Bolger is one of the protected males for a while, and very simpering and comical. He asserts his manhood in the end and is very manly and comical. He is also, as always, an incredible dancer. There is good dancing by a lot of others, and particularly by Robert and Lewis Hightower and Flower Hujer. Miss Moore, who is new to this trying business of the stage, acts pleasantly, sings amiably and is in all respects attractive. Miss Venuta, naturally more hearty, is a vigorous Amazon queen; Ronald Graham is an impressive Greek with a fine voice and Bertha Belmore and Margaret Bannerman do more acting than one has a right to look for in musical comedy.

Practically all the songs have the proper Rodgers and Hart flavor. "The Gateway to the Temple of Minerva" is an admirable song and probably you will like "Life With Father" as Mr. Bolger sings it, and "Here's a Hand" as sung by Miss Moore and Mr. Graham and "Nobody's Heart Belongs to Me" and "Careless Rhapsody." But maybe you will like some of the others better, and that will be all right, too. (It is possible, however, that none of the songs is unforgettable.) There is enough comedy for any one but a glutton; neither the costumes nor the sets have been rationed and the atmosphere is wholly carefree. Very cheerful occasion, on the whole.

"By Jupiter"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
June 4, 1942

Ray Bolger and Benay Venuta Appear in Musicalized 'Warrior's Husband'

By JOHN ANDERSON

THOUGH Julian Thompson's Amazonian farce was moderately mischievous when, as "The Warrior's Husband" it skyrocketted Katharine Hepburn to fame some seasons ago, its fun has been doubled and redoubled in a grand slam by conversion into a musical show called "By Jupiter" which was presented at the Shubert Theatre last night by Richard Rodgers and Dwight Deere Wiman in association with Richard Kollmar. Its gender troubles are slyly naughty and amusing, Mr. Rodgers' music is beguiling, the production brilliantly pictorial and Ray Bolger, its dancing star and chief funmaker, superb. Altogether it is, I suspect, the gayest and prettiest show of what passes for the season.

The chief source of humor is, of course, the plight of the domesticated Amazonian males kept in idle ease by their war-like ladies, and especially Sapiens, a gentle youth wedded somewhat forcibly to the stalwart Queen, Hippolyta. It is this part, played by Romney Brent with Miss Hepburn, which now falls to Mr. Bolger, whose loping and hilarious angularity removes it," as Mr. Brent's fastidious wit did, from the offensively androgyne, to the realm of "By Jupiter's" goofiest burlesque.

Much Gaiety Added

In converting the play into a book for a musical comedy Mr. Rodgers, and his collaborator, Lorenz Hart, have added a good deal of gaiety to the proceedings, for as a play the joke expanded as it was from an original one-acter, did begin to wear a little thin in three acts. Here they can let the story relax, and turn the stage over to Robert Alton for some excellent dance routines, done handsomely in some of Irene Sharaff's best costumes amidst Jo Mielziner's beautiful settings.

They can step aside from the plot to let Mr. Bolger do his peerless footwork or render, with suitable winks, such virginal songs as "Life With Father," "No, Mother, No," and "Nobody's Heart Belongs To Me." They can forget the story in the pagan ballet of "The Gateway of the Temple of Minerva," or touch the Broadway heart beat in the lyrical woocries of "Here's a Hand," all delightful tunes off Mr. Rodgers' most sophisticated music racks.

But when they need the plot it is there to lean on, which is as it should be. They get some added merriment by introducing both Homer, as a war correspondent, and Hercules, whose assignment it was to capture from the Amazons the girdle of Diana and so reduce those belligerent ladies to suitable subservience. After that and ever since, they have had to do their best fighting at home, in the undeclared battle between the sexes.

As the warrior queen Hippolyta Benay Venuta gives a performance of much humorous gusto and with Mr. Bolger she engages in a fascinating knock-down and drag-out item called "Everything I've Got." Though Constance Moore is beautiful to look at and prettily arrogant as the cupid-wrecked Antiope (the part played by Miss Hepburn) her voice is hardly equal to the occasion.

Fortunately, in the best numbers, she has the powerful assistance of Ronald Graham, who sings and plays an admirable Theseus and maintains the necessary romantic balance. There is helpful work in smaller parts by Mark Dawson, Berni Gould, and especially Bertha Belmore, who was in the original "Warrior's Husband" and who does a few unforgettable steps with Mr. Bolger. Robert and Lewis Hightower do some spectacular and muscular dancing, and the whole show has the speed, gaiety and sophistication of Broadway's shiniest showmanship.

So see "By Jupiter," by Jove! and by all means.

'BY JUPITER'

A musical comedy in two acts; based on "The Warrior's Husband," by Julian F. Thompson; book by Lorens Hart and Richard Rodgers; lyrics by Mr. Hart; music by Mr. Rodgers; staged by Joshua Logan; dances by Robert Alton; settings by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Irene Sharaff; presented at the Shubert Theater on June 3, 1942, by Wiman and Rodgers, in association with Richard Kollmar. The cast:

Achilles	Bob Douglas
A herald	Mark Dawson
Agamemnon	Robert Hightower
Buria	Jane Manners
First sentry	Martha Burnett
Second sentry	Rose Inghram
Third sentry	Kay Kimber
Sergeant	Monica Moore
Caustica	Maidel Turner
Heroica	Margaret Bannerman
Pomposia	Bertha Belmore
First boy	Don Liberto
Second boy	Tony Matthews
Third boy	William Vaux
Hippolyta	Benay Venuta
Sapiens	Ray Bolger
Antiope	Constance Moore
A huntress	Helen Bennett
An amazon dancer	Flower Hujer
Theseus	Ronald Graham
Homer	Berni Gould
Minerva	Vera-Ellen
Slaves	Robert and Lewis Hightower
Amazon runner	Wana Wenerholm
Hercules	Ralph Dumke
Penelope	Irene Corlett
First camp follower	Vera-Ellen
Second camp follower	Ruth Brady
Third camp follower	Helen Bennett
Fourth camp follower	Joyce Ring
Fifth camp follower	Rosemary Sankey

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
June 4, 1942

A Great Dancer Heads a Fair Show

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

BEING a superb dancer, Ray Bolger more than deserves the honor that he is enjoying for the first time in *By Jupiter*—that of being starred alone. For the audience, however, it is an honor that proves something of a disadvantage. For, as the star of the show, Bolger talks, sings, cuts up and wanders around more than he dances.

He sings and cuts up and wanders around very pleasantly, but so do a lot of other people; whereas, nobody else in muscial comedy can dance within miles of him. His technique is terrific, his inventiveness inexhaustible, and his comic sense, which manifests itself in every part of his dancing legs and body, is a delight. He proved it again Wednesday night, and I suppose that if you add up all the steps he took, they come to a fair-sized figure.

But somehow, considering how much he was on the stage, it didn't seem like enough dancing. And somehow he never let himself go in one great, overwhelming triumphant burst.

Perhaps one reason why I felt cheated is that the rest of the show is by no means memorable Rodgers and Hart. It's professional and lavish and large-scale, with Johnny Green conducting the orchestra with zip, and Bob Alton throwing in some whirlwind dance routines, and a very pretty chorus, and some gorgeous Irene Sharaff costumes. It has one charming Rodgers tune, *Nobody's Heart Belongs to Me*, and several perfectly alright ones; but the score as a whole lacks distinction. It has some clever Larry Hart lyrics, but a good many that merely seen strained. It has a good farce idea for a book, but since it's one of those ideas that refuse to take a moment's vacation, it begins after a while to wear a little thin. *By Jupiter* is a musical comedy that gets by all right, but that (except when Bolger is dancng) never goes to town.

The story, taken from *The Warrior's Husband*—the play in which Katharine Hepburn made her Broadway debut—tells of the ancient Amazon women who wear the armor and brandish the swords, while their sweet, little menfolk loll about and do the housework. The women shall rule, the legend runs, so long as one of them wears the girdle bestowed by Diana. So, when a motley army of Greeks that includes Hercules and Homer suddenly invade them, they have their girdle to defend as well as their country; and for the purposes of *By Jupiter* nobody thinks twice about the country. The women warriors are, however, in the very pleasant position of winning even if they lose.

In this reversed world, where the jokes are all pretty much of one kind, the lean and long-faced Mr. Bolger languishes as the queen's simpering bridegroom, and doesn't grow hair on his chest until quite late in the evening.

The featured ladies of the cast, Constance Moore and Benay Venuta, play their Amazonian roles with plenty of force and fire, but force and fire are hardly the qualities one looks for most in musical-comedy gals. Fortunately Miss Moore is also good looking, though she hasn't much of a voice. Ronald Graham has, of course, a quite good one. Flower Hujer and Robert and Lewis Hightower are a very good dancing trio, and Bertha Belmore adds some comedy as Bolger's Amazonian mama.

Together with Bolger she does an extremely funny dance, that is one of the high points of the show.

NEW YORK TIMES
June 4, 1942

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"By Jupiter"

THE new Rodgers and Hart musical show leered its way into the Shubert Theatre last evening, complete with Ray Bolger in tunic and Benay Venuta and Bertha Belmore in tights. It was all right, too. Perhaps in adapting "The Warrior's Husband" of a decade back into "By Jupiter," Broadway's own Gilbert and Sullivan have not written their greatest show, but pending that event it will do. With a few of Richard Rodgers's better tunes, and a fist full of Lorenz Hart's casually complicated lyrics, it is beautifully costumed, well directed and played by every one for all that is in it.

Remembered now mainly as the play in which Katharine Hepburn first became Katharine Hepburn, "The Warrior's Husband"—and its musical child—concern one of the labors of Achilles. For that worthy, it will be remembered, has come to capture the girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, in the land where the customs are strange and the women fight the wars and the men tend the home. Mr. Hart has made a reasonably close freehand transcription of the Julian F. Thompson comedy, pausing only to put in some normal Rodgers and Hart moments of their own from the classics—boogie-woogie and gags.

* * *

Mr. Bolger of the dancing feet and the expressive face is the unhappy Sapiens, the husband of Queen Hippolyta. He can cross the stage like a waif, or a King, he can sing or mug. He can play the unhappy, mincing consort of Hippolyta before the Greeks brought the breath of new thought into the kingdom of the Amazons, and afterward he can bellow like an injured Senator. There is much for him to do and Mr. Bolger is not a one to back away from a part. He is magnificent.

Benay Venuta, the strident, is Hippolyta, and as they say of the concert platform, she is in good rousing voice. Bertha Belmore—who played the same role in "The Warrior's Husband" ten years ago—is back as Pomposia, mother of Sapiens, and with Mr. Bolger she does a dance that practically ends all dances. Out of the movies they took Constance Moore for the part Miss Hepburn had, Antiope, and Ronald Graham is Theseus. Miss Moore is more attractive than vocal.

* * *

As to Mr. Rodgers's contributions: There are a number of good songs—"Jupiter Forbid," "The Gateway of the Temple of

(Continued on following page)